

## The Year of the **Red** Wolf

### SPRING

**Pups** are born in the safety of a **den** in April or May after a **gestation** period of 63 days. **Litters** vary in size from as few as one to as many as nine and sometimes more. The average litter is four or five, but the number of pups depends on a variety of factors such as the amount of **prey** available.

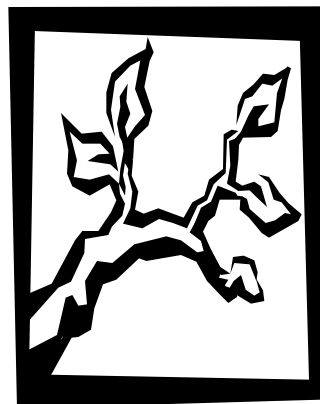
Dens vary from a hollowed-out place under a log to an underground chamber at the end of a tunnel. Because water is important to the nursing mother, den sites are typically near a stream or other natural water supply.

Pups weigh about a pound at birth. They are blind and deaf, and since they cannot regulate their body temperature, their mother stays close to them to keep them warm.

Baby wolves are born without teeth. A set of **milk teeth** emerges during the second week of life, but these teeth are lost and replaced by the permanent teeth used for killing prey and for tearing and ripping meat. Baby wolves make their first attempts at **howling** at about four weeks. Their eyes open within the first two weeks, usually between 11 and 14 days. Their ears, which are floppy and limp at birth, begin to become erect at about four weeks.

Meat for the mother is brought by the father. If the **pack** consists of several adults, all of the pack members will help to feed the mother. Only the mother enters the den with the pups. They begin to emerge from the den at about three weeks, but they are still dependent on the mother wolf for several more weeks until they are **weaned**. Caring for the pups is the responsibility of all the members of the wolf family. As weaning approaches, the pups begin to drink less milk and to eat more of the meat that is brought to them from a kill site by the adults. The adults carry the meat in their stomachs. The pups greet the adults by licking their muzzles. This causes the adults to **regurgitate** a meal of partially digested meat.

By five or six weeks, the mother stops nursing the pups. Their diet consists of meat brought by the adults, bones, pieces of hide, and insects they catch. Pups grow rapidly in the first weeks of life. They explore the area close to the den, playing and wrestling with each other to gain strength. Personalities begin to emerge, and **dominant** and **submissive** behaviors begin to be evident in play.



### VOCABULARY

- |               |                 |
|---------------|-----------------|
| 1. pups       | 7. howl         |
| 2. gestation  | 8. pack         |
| 3. den        | 9. wean         |
| 4. litter     | 10. regurgitate |
| 5. prey       | 11. dominant    |
| 6. milk teeth | 12. submissive  |